

Message Text

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42

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SUBJ: CECIL WALLACE-WHITFIELD REENTERS POLITICS

1. FORMER FNM LEADER CECIL V. WALLACE-WHITFIELD, IT WAS ANNOUNCED DECEMBER 22, HAS DECIDED TO STAND FOR THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY FROM MARSH HARBOUR, ABACO. HE WILL HAVE THE COMBINED SUPPORT OF THE FNM AND ABACO HOME RULE MOVEMENT (AHRM) IN THE NEXT ELECTIONS NOW DUE IN 1977.

2. A LAWYER AND FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE PLP, WALLACE-WHITFIELD LED A GROUP OF PLP DISSIDENTS INTO THE FNM IN 1971, AFTER AN EARLIER FALLING OUT WITH PRIME MINISTER PINDLING. ALTHOUGH INACTIVE POLITICALLY SINCE 1973, HE IS CONSIDERED THE MOST DYNAMIC AND CAPABLE FNM POLITICIAN. HIS REENTRY INTO POLITICS AT THIS TIME HAS GIVEN NEW LIFE TO PERSISTENT RUMORS THAT HE WILL REPLACE KENDALL ISAACS AS FNM LEADER. SUCH AN EVENTUALITY WOULD PROVIDE A SUBSTANTIAL BOOST TO FNM ELECTION HOPES AND MIGHT EVEN EXACERBATE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE PLP. IN ANY EVENT, THE SAFE MARSH HARBOUR SEAT WILL PROVIDE A BASE FROM WHICH HE WILL BE RELATIVELY FREE TO CONCENTRATE ON NATIONAL AFFAIRS.

3. IN BACKING WALLACE-WHITFIELD AS AN FNM CANDIDATE, THE LEADERS OF THE SEPARATIST AHRM HAVE REPORTEDLY GIVEN UP ON PURSUING THEIR AIMS INDEPENDENTLY AND HAVE ALSO GIVEN HIM A FREE HAND IN CHOOSING A RUNNING MATE FOR THE MARGINALLY PLP

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COOPERS TOWN DISTRICT ON NORTH ABACO. FOR HIS PART, WALLACE-

WHITFIELD HAS PLEDGED TO WORK TOWARD A SYSTEM OF GREATER AUTONOMY FOR THE OUT ISLANDS.

4. OUR CONTINUING ASSESSMENT HAS BEEN THAT WALLACE-WHITFIELD WAS THE ONE MAN WITH SUFFICIENT CHARISMA TO GIVE LYNDEN O. PINDLING A RUN FOR HIS MONEY. ALL OF OUR PRIVATE SOURCES, INCLUDING SOME IN SENIOR POSITIONS IN FNM, DESCRIBE WALLACE-WHITFIELD AS A MAN NOT TO BE TRUSTED (SOME JUST PLAIN CALL HIM A CROOK) BUT ALL AGREE HE IS A FIRST CLASS POLITICIAN AND A VOTE GETTER.

5. IF WALLACE-WHITFIELD IS IN THE RACE, AND IF THIS SIGNALS A CLOSER AND TOUGHER FIGHT FOR CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT THIS HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR FACILITIES NEGOTIATIONS. ON THE ONE HAND PINDLING UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD WISH TO GET MAXIMUM POLITICAL MILAGE OUT OF U.S. CONCESSIONS ON QUID. HE PROBABLY COULD DEAL A SERIOUS BLOW TO FNM BY A CORRECT TIMING OF PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF WHAT HE WAS ABLE TO NEGOTIATE. ON THE OTHER HAND, SINCE FNM LEADERSHIP HAS IMPLIED THAT THEY STRONGLY FAVORED U.S. RETAINING FACILITIES, THEY WOULD QUITE LIKELY MAKE A FAILURE BY PINDLING TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH US A MAJOR ISSUE IN THE ELECTION. IN SUM, PINDLING WILL HAVE TO WEIGH THE EXAGGERATED EXPECTATION HIS GOVERNMENT HAS RE A QUID (AS REFLECTED IN THEIR ASKING PRICE) AGAINST THE POSITIVE AND POLITICAL IMPACT AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF AN AGREEMENT WOULD HAVE VERSUS PROBABLE NEGATIVE EFFECT OF A FAILURE TO REACH AGREEMENT.

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